



HARVARD Kennedy School

**ASH INSTITUTE**

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## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA'S DATA FEEDS WINS INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AWARD

*Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Institute Recognizes Program's Efforts to Democratize Access to District Data*

Cambridge, Mass., – September 15, 2009 – The [Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation](#) at the [John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University](#) today announced the District of Columbia's [Data Feeds: Democratization of Government Data](#) as the winner of the 2009 Innovations in American Government Award in Urban Policy. Designed to increase civic participation, government accountability, and transparency in D.C. government practices, this is the first initiative in the country that makes virtually all current district government operational data available to the public in its raw form rather than in static, edited reports. The program is one of six government innovations honored at yesterday's Innovations in American Government Awards ceremony and will receive a grant towards the dissemination of its innovation around the country. Yesterday's event concluded with the premier of [2009 Visionaries](#), a PBS-produced documentary highlighting this year's Innovations winners.

### The Innovation in Detail

Spearheaded by the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO), raw data from multiple D.C. government agencies is housed at the District's Citywide Data Warehouse (CityDW) and supplied via over 320 data feeds to online sites, citizens, and government agencies to increase civic awareness. The city's informational websites include

- [Digital Public Square](#): This virtual town hall offers citizens access to current government information along with avenues for involvement and collaboration through social networks.
- [D.C. Data Catalog](#): This online site allows users to subscribe to real time data feeds of information ranging from public space permits and completed construction projects to juvenile crime data and government employee credit card transactions.

District residents have also created their own informational websites populated by CityDW data feeds including [JDland.com](http://JDland.com), a site dedicated to news and information in Southeast Washington. The site recently received the Knight-Batten Citizen Media Award for Innovation in Journalism.

### **Apps for Democracy**

In addition to these online sites, OCTO launched an annual Apps for Democracy contest awarding the best applications that use CityDW data feeds. Its 2008 contest received 47 applications from software developers in 30 days – avoiding an estimated \$2.6 million in internal development costs. Winning applications, many crafted with the developer's own community interests in mind, include [live.at](http://live.at), an application that allows residents to locate banks, grocery stores, crime data, and demographics in their areas. Other applications include a D.C. biking guide, historical building data, and parking meter locations. Many of these applications are now featured on the Digital Public Square.

### **Improving Government Performance**

Making raw data publicly available has lessened the burden on city infrastructure. Since its implementation, city administrators report less time spent fielding questions and requests for information. Data feeds also serve as the informational backbone for the city's CapStat program, an internal performance management system used by the mayor and city officials to track agency performance against established goals. Such readily available metrics create a culture of accountability that has resulted in improved performance in key areas such as reduced health care wait room times, lowered city fixed costs, and institutional improvements in fighting crime.

"The District's Citywide Data Warehouse allows residents to hold their government accountable," said Washington, D.C. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty. "By providing District residents with the resources to make highly informed decisions, my administration can more directly align the services we provide with District residents' wishes."

"The District's efforts to democratize access to data create increased government accountability and transparency while opening up new arenas for substantial citizen engagement in government," said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in American Government Program at Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Institute. "Any citizen with access to the internet can learn up-to-date information about everything from parking availability to crime statistics in their neighborhoods. We commend this program's efforts and hope that other jurisdictions will adopt its innovative practices."

**About the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation**

The Roy and Lila Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation advances excellence in governance and strengthens democratic institutions worldwide. Through its research, education, international programs, and government innovations awards, the Institute fosters creative and effective government problem solving and serves as a catalyst for addressing many of the most pressing needs of the world's citizens. The Ford Foundation is a founding donor of the Institute. Additional information about the Ash Institute is available at [www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu](http://www.ashinstitute.harvard.edu).

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